

In Memoriam: Dr Jeffrey Featherstone

Susan Spinella Sacks considers herself very fortunate. She had the opportunity to work with Dr. Jeffrey Featherstone, Director of Temple's Center for Sustainable Communities, almost from the very beginning.

"I was the first research assistant in the Center," said Spinella Sacks, who currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Center. From day one, "we were always colleagues, we were always a team."

"That's who Jeff was — students, faculty, staff, he treated everyone the same. He was the smartest person in the room, but he never made you feel that way and he always valued the opinions of others," she said. "He put together a group of people whose expertise and talents only strengthened one another."

For Temple University and everyone who knew Featherstone, Saturday, May 7, was a day of unexpected and tragic loss. Featherstone, 68, passed away after a sudden and severe illness.

While family, wife Nancy of 41 years and twin daughters Lia and Lin, friends colleagues and students mourn his profound loss, they are also remembering and celebrating a legacy built tirelessly over decades locally, nationally and internationally; in the classroom and out.

Born in Redwing and then raised in Winona, Minnesota, Featherstone arrived at Temple with decades of experience. A specialist in water resources management and dispute resolution, he was Deputy Executive Director of the Delaware River Basin Commission from 1982 to 2001. Prior to DRBC, he was Planning Director for the Upper Mississippi River Basin Commission and Water Resources Planner, and was Hydrologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Joining Temple University in 2001 as the director of the Center for Sustainable Communities, Dr. Featherstone was appointed as the founding Chair of the Department of Community and Regional Planning in October 2002 and served in that capacity until August 2006.

Featherstone went on to help lay the groundwork for sustainability education and research at Temple for years to come.

A member of Temple's \$1 Million Research Club, Featherstone secured more than \$10 million in research grants and successfully completed over 30 research projects at the Center. He has ensured the future success of the Center for the next several years as research fellows, faculty and students continue comprehensive projects throughout the region. By June 2016, the Center will have secured well over \$2.8 million in grants during this fiscal year alone.

"Despite his accomplishments, Jeff had no interest in personal accolades," said Rick Fromuth, a Research Fellow with the Center for Sustainable Communities who knew Featherstone for 35 years. "This approach built trust and respect across academic departments as well as government and non-profit organizations — this is how he built the Center for Sustainable Communities."

Featherstone's expertise was also recognized internationally.

In 1995, he served as a ranking member of the U.S. Water Resources Delegation to China — he has since advised Chinese government officials on water conservation and sustainability issues. A valued member of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) for more than a decade, he participated in international conferences in Poland and Russia and chaired the organization's conference in Brisbane, Australia in 2013. In 2015, Featherstone led an international team of city planners to explore

and recommend revitalization efforts in the West Bank of the Jordan River. He also provided technical assistance to a second team in the Gaza Strip.

Here at home, Featherstone led projects in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties to ensure healthy drinking water, help municipalities avoid the damaging effects of flooding, provide effective transportation, ensure food equity, and support sustainable communities for today and tomorrow. The Center's stormwater management research in the Pennypack and Wissahickon watersheds and other regions of the state led to complete floodplain remapping by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Jeff was ahead of his time in his work; he helped many local and international communities through his practice-based research. He was hands-on and on-site for every project," said Hester Stinnett, Interim Dean of the Tyler School of Art. "We will honor Jeff's legacy by continuing the Center's work — Tyler and Temple fully support the Center and are committed to its essential mission."

Dr. Lynn Mandarano, Chair of the Department of Planning and Community Development adds, "Jeff has not only touched our lives, but the lives of hundreds of our students and alumni with whom he shared his passion, dedication, knowledge and, above all, his sense of humor. Through his work at the Center, and throughout his career, Jeff has made the Delaware River Watershed incrementally more sustainable and a healthier place to live."

The Jeffrey Featherstone Memorial Scholarship has been established to support a student in the Master of Science in City and Regional Planning program who shares Jeff's passion for sustainable water resources management.

Contributions to the Featherstone Memorial Scholarship may be made on line to:
giving.temple.edu/JeffreyFeatherstoneMemorialScholarship

or sent to Mollie Repetto, Tyler School of Art of Temple University, 2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122.